

# Information About Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

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## A New Disease Called SARS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is investigating a new disease called severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The disease was first reported among people in Guangdong Province (China), Hanoi (Vietnam), and Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China). It has since spread to other countries. As of April 7, more than 100 cases of SARS had been reported in the United States. This fact sheet provides basic information about the disease and what is being done to combat its spread.

## Symptoms of SARS

In general, SARS begins with a fever greater than 100.4°F [ $>38.0^{\circ}\text{C}$ ]. Other symptoms may include headache, an overall feeling of discomfort, and body aches. Some people also experience mild respiratory symptoms. After 2 to 7 days, SARS patients may develop a dry cough and have trouble breathing.

## How SARS Spreads

Public health experts think that SARS is spread by close contact between people. SARS is most likely spread when someone sick with the disease coughs droplets into the air and someone else breathes them in. It is possible that SARS also can spread more broadly through the air or from touching objects that have become contaminated.

## Who is at Risk for SARS

Cases of SARS continue to be reported mainly among people who have had direct close contact with an infected person, such as those sharing a household with a SARS patient and health-care workers who did not use infection control procedures while taking care of a SARS patient. In the United States, there is no indication of community spread at this time. CDC continues to monitor this situation very closely.

## Possible Cause of SARS

Scientists at CDC and other laboratories have detected a previously unrecognized coronavirus in patients with SARS. While the new coronavirus is still the leading hypothesis for the cause of SARS, other viruses are still under investigation as potential causes.

## What you should do to protect yourself

CDC has issued interim guidelines for patients with suspected SARS in the health-care setting and in households. These guidelines may change as we learn more about SARS. If you get sick with the symptoms described above and have been in close contact with someone who might have SARS, see your health-care provider and follow the guidelines below.

## **CDC Recommendations**

CDC has issued recommendation and guidelines for people who may be affected by this outbreak.

### **For individuals considering travel to affected parts of Asia:**

CDC advises that people planning elective or nonessential travel to mainland China and Hong Kong, Singapore, and Hanoi may wish to postpone their trips until further notice. Visit [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/travel\\_advice.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/travel_advice.htm) for more information about CDC's advice to travelers. People with symptoms of SARS (fever of more than 100.4°F [ $>38.0^{\circ}\text{C}$ ] that is accompanied.

### **For individuals who think they might have SARS:**

People with symptoms of SARS (fever of more than 100.4°F [ $>38.0^{\circ}\text{C}$ ] that is accompanied by a cough and/or difficulty breathing) should consult a healthcare provider. To help the healthcare provider make a diagnosis, tell them about any recent travel to places where SARS has been reported or whether there was contact with someone who had these symptoms.

### **For family members caring for someone with SARS:**

CDC has developed interim infection control recommendations available at [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/ic-closecontacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/ic-closecontacts.htm) for patients with suspected SARS in the household. These basic precautions should be followed for 10 days after respiratory symptoms and fever are gone. During that time, SARS patients are asked to limit interactions outside the home (not go to work, school, or other public areas).

### **For health care workers:**

Transmission of SARS to health care workers appears to have occurred after close contact with sick people before recommended infection control precautions were put into use. CDC has issued interim infection control recommendations for health care settings ([www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/infectioncontrol.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/infectioncontrol.htm)) as well as ([www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/exposureguidance.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/exposureguidance.htm)).

## **What CDC is doing about SARS**

CDC is working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners in a global effort to address the SARS outbreak. For its part, CDC has taken the following actions:

- C Activated its Emergency Operations Center to provide round-the-clock coordination and response.
- C Committed more than 250 medical experts and support staff to work on the SARS response.
- C Deployed medical officers, epidemiologists, and other specialists to assist with on-site investigations around the world.
- C Provided ongoing assistance to state and local health departments in investigating possible cases of SARS in the United States
- C Conducted extensive laboratory testing of clinical specimens from SARS patients to identify the cause of the disease.
- C Initiated a system for distributing health alert notices to travelers who may have been exposed to cases of SARS

To find out more about SARS, go to [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars) and [www.who.int/csr/sars/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/sars/en/) or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (Español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY)